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HIGH SCOPE APPROACH TO PRESCHOOL

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Abstract

In my paper I would like to underline the newest methods used in preschool education. Nowadays High Scope revolutionized early childhood education with a new approach to teaching and learning. For infant-toddler teachers, High Scope provides a comprehensive curriculum that addresses all areas of children development. Child based research discover that the High Scope Curriculum uses a carefully designed process, a process that determined children to actively participate in learning. The main objectives of preschool education emphasize the development of the fundamental skills that help and determine success in adult life. Being the most dynamic period for the development of child personality, kindergarten takes the leading role in education. Researchers have discovered, that the High Scope Preschool Curriculum not only helps young children excel in cognitive learning but also promotes independence, curiosity, decision-making, cooperation, persistence, creativity, and problem solving. Over time, man has been concerned with child education. Thus, specialists have attempted to study and identify the most viable ways of intervention in children education so that they would develop according to their innate abilities.

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1. Introduction

Over time, man has been concerned with child education. Thus, specialists have attempted to study and identify the most viable ways of intervention in children education so that they would develop according to their innate abilities. The child, acts upon the objects s/he makes contact with and is actively involved in his/her epistemological knowledge when s/he listens, talks, feels, sees, handles, builds and uses those objects. Active learning is regarded by scholars as an active process of actual involvement in one's own training. The involvement is both mental and physical. Considering that the pre-schoolers' age

is placed in psychological terms at an operational level, or more specifically the pre-operational stage, as Piaget refers to it, children need to learn based on a rich intuitional material. Neuro-psychological studies reveal that the educational environment as well as the way its development is stimulated are important in the development of human brain's cognitive abilities (Ansari, D., 2005). The child needs to interact directly with the environment and the objects in order to activate the cognitive abilities. The child builds his/her life experience by interacting and directly exploring the world, by actively handling objects, interacting with adults and peers from his/her immediate environment.

Morisson, in his book (Morisson, G., 2007) asks some pertinent questions:

- How can we achieve a high quality education?
- What are the basic features of such an educational programme?
- What would be the main directions of a proper early education curriculum?
- How can such an educational programme be successfully implemented?

First of all, we have to understand that pre-schoolers have the ability of learning by using their basic and most pleasant activity, which folds to their age characteristics. Through play, preschool children learn easily, the effort they make is pleasant and the actual activity is not regarded as obligation (Smith, P.K., Pellegrini, A., 2013). Below, there are some scholars' opinions about play as learning activity or as it is sometimes referred to in the literature *pedagogical play* (Wood, 2010):

- Froebel (Lindqvist & Lofdal, 2001) - through play children learning by being active;
- Montessori - (Bergen & Mauer, 2000; Saracho, 2003) - children develop their emotional perspective through play;
- Wood, E. (2013) – children socialize through play;
- Dunn (2007) - children develop interpersonal relations through play;
- Rogers, S. (2011) – children develop language through play
- Gilmore et al. (2007) – children develop their cognitive abilities through play.

Besides play, the educational environment plays an important part in child education (Johansson, & Pramling, S., 2006). Loris Malaguzzi in his constructivist model called *Reggio Emilia*, implements the child centred learning approach and puts particular emphasis on the educational environment, considered the third teacher. This educational environment includes the entire community as active participant, involved and dedicated to child education in the best and most appropriate conditions.

2. High Scope Education Approach

The main objective of this approach in preschool education is represented by “active participatory learning,” High Scope Education takes into account the child’s way of being, his/her real development abilities and advances a Curriculum focused on the development of child’s personality on all levels. This programme focuses on child development progressively from a very early age taking into consideration a child’s learning abilities at early ages. (Schweinhart, L., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W., Belfield, C., & Nores, M., 2005). The teacher interferes with very carefully planned activities which aim child development according to a child’s own pace and possibilities. It is believed that a child’s active involvement in learning leads to motivation and knowledge stimulation as well as to plenary child development. This very aspect is stressed out by the Curriculum based on high scope education by emphasizing the following aspects:

- planning of daily activities according to the children’s age;
- stimulating learning by selecting learning activities which arise their curiosity;
- using educationally suitable teaching materials;
- motivating children for a full and active engagement in learning activities.

Learning within high scope programmes occurs under close teacher guidance, children and teachers are partners in learning. Learning takes place in an educational environment which has been adapted to preschool age. The main learning activity is play. Children have at hand different and attractive materials that arise their interest towards knowledge and motivate them to discover, ask questions and get actively involved in learning. Teachers support the child’s evolution step by step, interfere when necessary and use the most appropriate methods which would determine the child to move on to a superior level of knowledge according to his/her own pace. .

Linda Dunlop, in 2014, in her book *High Scope: One Program Model* highlights the most important features of this method from an educational perspective:

- *Help children develop the ability to make choices;*
- *Help children develop self-discipline by carrying out plans;*
- *Develop children's ability to cooperate with others;*
- *Increase children's knowledge about objects and skills;*
- *Increase children's ability to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings;*
- *Help children better understand verbal and nonverbal communication;*
- *Develop children's ability to apply reasoning skills to a variety of situations;*
- *Further develop children's creativity, initiative, and openness to learning.* (Dunlop, L., 2014).

High scope education focuses only on the child’s interest and takes into account his/her abilities and skills within the learning programme. The Curriculum focuses on five main approach areas in child development: *approaches to learning; language, literacy, & communication; social and emotional development; physical development, health, and well-being; and arts and sciences.* (High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2009). The main objectives of High scope approach in education are:

- active learning;
- arranging the educational environment;
- daily schedule;

- assessment;
- curriculum.

Daily activities which form the basis for the implementation of High Scope programme are designed according to children's age characteristics and individual features as well as the child's independence in actions. The programme is elaborated according to the child's level of understanding. Pre-schoolers are all equal within the educational programme and are capable of acting according to their own interests, taking decisions and acting confidently and responsibly. To reach their goals, educators talk to the pre-schoolers about future activities, the topics and subjects they would like to approach. This attitude favours an responsible and stimulating working climate for all children. The educators' role is the generate experiences which are proper for the children's concerns, which enrich their life experience and develop their abilities. While pre-schoolers perform various activities, the educators observe the relationships that develop between them, the ways of interaction. While pre-schoolers perform various activities, teachers observe the relationships that develop between them, the ways of interaction, the problem solving abilities and interfere only to encourage the children, to support their activity and help them when necessary. Morrison underlines in *High Scope: A Constructivist Approach* that this approach offers: *a method for implementing a constructivist-based program that has its roots in Dewey's philosophy and Piagetian cognitive theory.* (Morrison, G., 2011).

3. Methodology

Our study was conducted throughout the school year 2015-2016, in 7 kindergartens in Arad with more parallel groups of the same age. Initial testing revealed similarities between groups in terms of psycho-physical development. The experimental groups were numbered with A from 1 to 7. These groups worked with the High Scope Education Programme while the parallel groups conducted their usual activity. The hypothesis was that if the High Scope Educational programme is introduced, then the pre-schoolers will be better prepared for school. This aspect is noticeable in their oral and written fluency abilities, in their inter-human socializing abilities, in the rapidity of problem solving and in the way they deal with emotions.

Table 1. Results, high scope Curriculum and Curriculum for early education

	Curriculum High Scope (Mean) N= 175	Curriculum for Early Education (Mean) N = 175
Sense of observation	8,7	8,4
Motivation to learn	9,3	8,5
Creativity	8,5	8,1
Independence	8,2	7,6
Initiative	8,7	7,9
Rapidity in solving problems	8,8	8,5
Self confidence	9,2	8,7

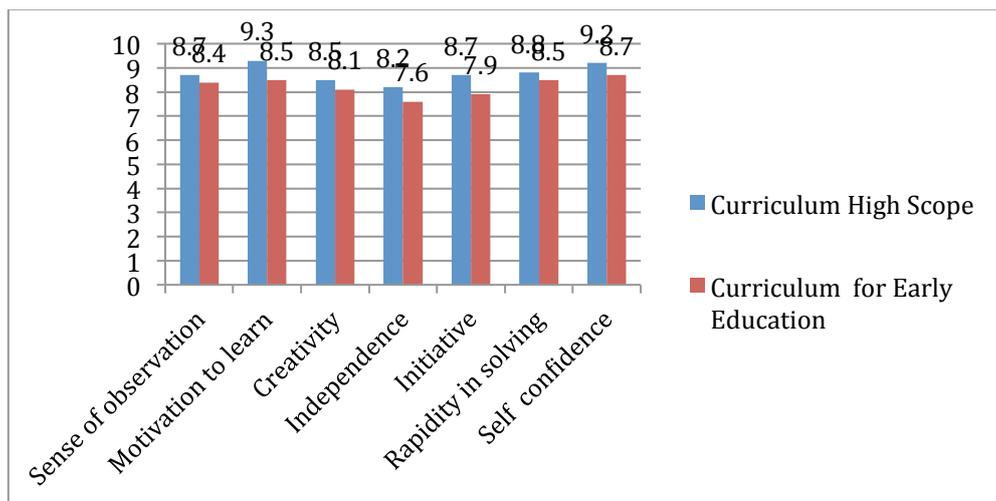


Fig.1. The results of study concerning different curricula

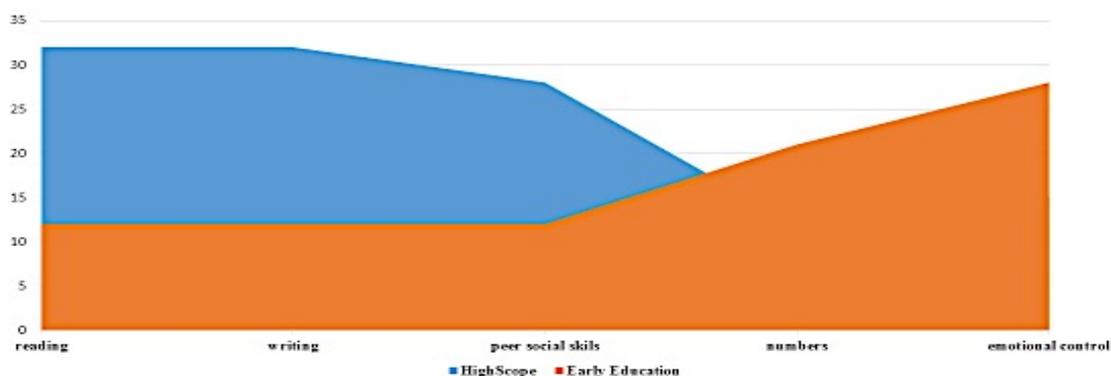
To test out our hypothesis, we used the independent t test coefficient. We expected to find out significant differences between the Curriculum High Scope group - CHS (N= 175) and Curriculum for Early Education group - CEE (N = 175) related to the mean evaluations of the 7 dimensions tested: sense of observation, motivation to learn, creativity, independence, initiative, rapidity in solving problems and self-confidence.

Table 2. Independent t test results

		Group Statistics								
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean					
assessment	1 - CHS	7	8,7714	,38173	,14428					
	2 - CEE	7	8,2429	,39097	,14777					
		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
assessment	Equal variances assumed	,138	,717	2,559	12	,025	,52857	,20653	,07859	,97855
	Equal variances not assumed			2,559	11,993	,025	,52857	,20653	,07856	,97858

As presented in Table 2, when analyzing the differences between CHS and CEE assessments, we obtained a coefficient $t = 2,559$ significant at a $p < 0, 05$ result that confirms our hypothesis. The mean of CHS assessment $m = 8,77$ is significantly superior to the mean of CEE assessment $m = 8,24$, fact that clearly proves that CHS group has developed better competences: sense of observation, motivation to learn, creativity, independence, initiative, rapidity in solving problems and self-confidence, than CEE group. This curriculum aims to promote active learning by providing many opportunities for children to initiate their own activities and take responsibility for completing them. Active participatory learning suggests that children learn best through hands-on experiences with context, situations and information. In the High-Scope approach the control of current situations are shared between children and adults, compared to traditional approach, and adult's role is to support and guide children in developing adventures and experiences that integrate learning by doing.

Impact in child developig



4. Conclusions

The High Scope Education programme is the best way to improve the development of children's personality: this approach stimulates the participation of all children in the daily activities with pleasure, interest and the most important thing is their high motivation. While children participate in the teaching activities they are challenged to initiate, to discover, to experience and learn about different people, objects, ideas, events, as well as learn in a proper manner. The High Scope Education programme promotes a curriculum particularly adapted to children and integrates all aspects of their development. This approach enhances the children evolution in the foundation of academic growth as well as in their physical and psychical dimension. The High Scope programme is adapted to each individual and has as main objective: a complex system of teaching practices, defined curriculum content areas for each topic and age group, assessment tools, and a training model. Thus, children who undergo this learning programme improve their preparation for school by creating, experimenting, problem-solving, and solving conflicts. The principle of High Scope approach is oriented to teach and learn, to educate children through hands-on experiences with materials, events, ideas and people.

High Scope Education's principle Plan-do-review, developed to help play become meaningful implies many different ways of putting it into practice, thus adapting any other learning technique to this approach is not such a difficult task. In short-term, High Scope teaching and constructivist program were about equally effective in the cognitive domain, but long term, the additional benefits were more obvious: better self-regulation, a good attitude towards work, motivation and a positive social adjustment and behavior, which had superior social outcomes (reduced delinquency and increasing economic independence) in early stages of adulthood compared to other approaches. These social outcomes can be best highlighted in a subsequent period of the program.

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